



PRESS RELEASE

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rites of enchantment -- When the Creatures Come Out To Celebrate

The U.S. Botanic Garden Celebrates Holidays in the Tropics

November 27, 2003 - January 4, 2004

July 30, 2003 - Washington, DC - The U.S. Botanic Garden's annual winter holiday display will open in the Conservatory on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 2003. Entitled *Rites of Enchantment -- When the Creatures Come Out To Celebrate*, the display will continue through January 4, 2004.

This year, the Botanic Garden remembers that "winter holidays" are also observed in the tropics where snow, red-berried hollies, fir trees, and other winter scenes of temperate climates are not part of the landscape. This year's holiday exhibit will draw inspiration from the cultures and landscapes of Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, the Caribbean nations, and other regions between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.

In the West Gallery, palms and other tropical plants will provide the setting for the garden railway exhibit provided once again by the Washington, Virginia & Maryland Garden Railway Society. The trains will meander through tropical landscapes, carrying fresh produce from a mountain plantation and stopping by a rural village decorated for the holidays -- and narrowly avoiding the calamity of an erupting volcano!

In the Garden Court, visitors will experience a magical scene. Here is revealed the "long-held secret" of how tree frogs, geckos, and other denizens of our Jungle celebrate the season in their own style. The legend is that long ago, when our Jungle plantation was thriving, the animals watched the human inhabitants decorate and celebrate each December. Now, with the plantation in ruins and the origins of their own traditions lost, the animals have adorned themselves with the recovered remnants of holiday finery. Come see what happens when these fanciful "creatures" emerge from the Jungle and gather around the Garden Court pools to admire their reflections and make seasonal merriment.

The United States Botanic Garden Conservatory is open to the public, free of charge, every day of the year from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Conservatory is located at 100 Maryland Avenue, SW, at the foot of the U.S. Capitol. Visitors are encouraged to take Metrobus and Metrorail. Further information is available by calling 202-225-8333 or visiting our web site at www.usbg.gov.

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